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IVANHOE

by Sir Walter Scott

LIFE was dangerous and exciting in 12th century England. King Richard—nicknamed The Lion-Hearted—was absent, fighting the Saracens in the Holy Land. At home, relations between the Saxons and their Norman conquerors were strained. Prince John, the king's brother, was plotting to seize the throne. And Robin Hood and his men, ranging through Sherwood Forest, created consternation in the hearts of the authorities.

In this setting Sir Walter Scott places the action of *IVANHOE*. This is one of his most brilliant and popular works, one of the series of Waverly novels which were the forerunners of today's historical novel.

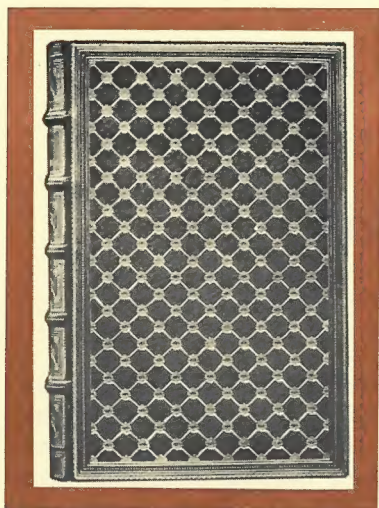
As in Scott's other historical romances, the fictional characters occupy the front of the stage, with the great personalities of the era moving in the background. This is as it should be, for it affords the author a free hand to use his creativity in developing a rounded, fleshed-out picture of the society of the times as reflected in the daily lives of the people—besides, of course, spinning a tale that entertains and beguiles.

The characters in this story have achieved an honorary place in the pageant of England's history as viewed through the literature of fiction: Cedric the Saxon...his bewitching ward, Rowena, whom Cedric plans to give in marriage to Athelstane...Cedric's disinherited son Wilfred of Ivanhoe, banished because he sought Rowena for himself...Brian de Bois-Guilbert, a haughty Knight Templar...Isaac of York, wealthy money-lender...his daughter Rebecca, said to be Scott's own favorite among all his heroines...and many other unforgettable personalities who serve to make this one of the truly fascinating romances of English literature.

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The 19th Century Mercier Binding



THE International Collectors Library makes available to members a series of *Great English Novels of the 19th Century*, all bound in a superb design worthy to serve as an outer garment for this group of distinguished masterworks.

The binding on your volume has been re-created by the contemporary artist Rafael Palacios from an

older binding found on a volume of *Memoires de Madame de Staël*, published in Paris in 1891. The original design (*reproduced at the left*) was the creation of the French master bookbinder Emile Mercier. The delicate over-all pattern of squares running diagonally, with rosettes at each corner, reflects the elegant taste of a bygone era of craftsmanship. The spine on the original bears raised bands (a distinctive mark of many fine collectors' volumes) and was divided into six panels with a gold *pointillé* ornament.

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